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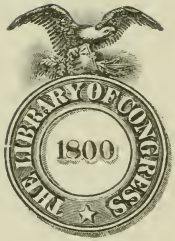
WILLIAM McKINLEY

JOHN HAY



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WILLIAM McKINLEY

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MEMORIAL ADDRESS

BY

JOHN HAY

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WILLIAM McKINLEY.

For the third time the Congress of the United States are assembled to commemorate the life and the death of a President slain by the hand of an assassin. The attention of the future historian will be attracted to the features which reappear with startling sameness in all three of these awful crimes: the uselessness, the utter lack of consequence of the act; the obscurity, the insignificance of the criminal; the blamelessness — so far as in our sphere of existence the best of men may be held blameless — of the victim. Not one of our murdered Presidents had an enemy in the world; they were all of such preëminent purity of life that no pretext could be given for the attack of passional crime; they were all men of democratic instincts, who could never have offended the most jealous advocates of equality; they were of kindly and generous nature, to whom wrong or injustice was impossible; of moderate fortune, whose slender means nobody could envy. They were men of austere virtue, of tender heart, of eminent abilities, which they had devoted with single minds to the good of the Republic. If ever men walked before God and man without blame, it was these three rulers of our people. The only temptation to attack their lives offered was their gentle radiance — to eyes hating the light that was offence enough.

The stupid uselessness of such an infamy affronts the common sense of the world. One can conceive how the death of a dictator may change the political conditions of an Empire; how the extinction of a narrowing line of kings may bring in an alien dynasty. But in a well-ordered Republic like ours, the ruler may fall, but the state feels no tremor. Our beloved and revered leader is gone — but the natural process of our laws provides us a successor, identical in purpose and ideals, nourished by the same teachings, inspired by the same principles, pledged by tender affection as well as by high loyalty to carry to completion the immense task committed to his hands, and to smite with iron severity every manifestation of that hideous crime which his mild predecessor, with his dying breath, forgave. The sayings of celestial wisdom have no date; the words that reach us, over two thousand years, out of the darkest hour of gloom the world has ever known, are true to the life to-day: "They know not what they do." The blow struck at our dear friend and ruler was as deadly as blind hate could make it; but the blow struck at anarchy was deadlier still.

What a world of insoluble problems such an event excites in the mind! Not merely in its personal but in its public aspects it presents a paradox not to be comprehended. Under a system of government so free and so impartial that we recognize its existence only by its benefactions; under a social order so purely democratic that classes cannot exist in it, affording opportunities so universal that even conditions are as changing as the winds, where the laborer of to-day is the capitalist of to-morrow; under laws which are the result of ages of evolution, so uniform and so beneficent that the President has just the same rights and privileges as the artisan; — we see the same hellish growth of hatred and murder

which dogs equally the footsteps of benevolent monarchs and blood-stained despots. How many countries can join with us in the community of a kindred sorrow! I will not speak of those distant regions where assassination enters into the daily life of government. But among the nations bound to us by the ties of familiar intercourse — who can forget that wise and high-minded autocrat who had earned the proud title of the Liberator? that enlightened and magnanimous citizen whom France still mourns? that brave and chivalrous King of Italy who only lived for his people? and, saddest of all, that lovely and sorrowing Empress, whose harmless life could hardly have excited the animosity of a demon. Against that devilish spirit nothing avails — neither virtue, nor patriotism, nor age, nor youth, nor conscience, nor pity. We cannot even say that education is a sufficient safeguard against this baleful evil — for most of the wretches whose crimes have so shocked humanity in recent years are men not unlettered, who have gone from the common schools through murder to the scaffold.

Our minds cannot discern the origin nor conceive the extent of wickedness so perverse and so cruel; but this does not exempt us from the duty of trying to control and counteract it. We do not understand what electricity is, whence it comes or what its hidden properties may be. But we know it as a mighty force for good or evil — and so with the painful toil of years, men of learning and skill have labored to store and to subjugate it, to neutralize, and even to employ its destructive energies. This problem of anarchy is dark and intricate, but it ought to be within the compass of democratic government — although no sane mind can fathom the mysteries of these untracked and orbitless natures — to guard against their aberrations, to take away from them

the hope of escape, the long luxury of scandalous days in court, the unwholesome sympathy of hysterical degenerates, and so by degrees to make the crime not worth committing, even to these abnormal and distorted souls.

It would be presumptuous for me in this presence to suggest the details of remedial legislation for a malady so malignant. That task may safely be left to the skill and patience of the National Congress, which have never been found unequal to any such emergency. The country believes that the memory of three murdered comrades of yours — all of whose voices still haunt these walls — will be a sufficient inspiration to enable you to solve even this abstruse and painful problem, which has dimmed so many pages of history with blood and with tears.

Before an audience less sympathetic than this I should not dare to speak of that great career which we have met to commemorate. But we are all his friends, and friends do not criticise each other's words about an open grave. I thank you for the honor you have done me in inviting me here, and not less for the kind forbearance I know I shall have from you in my most inadequate efforts to speak of him worthily.

The life of William McKinley was, from his birth to his death, typically American. There is no environment, I should say, anywhere else in the world which could produce just such a character. He was born into that way of life which elsewhere is called the middle class, but which in this country is so nearly universal as to make of other classes an almost negligible quantity. He was neither rich nor poor, neither proud nor humble; he knew no hunger he was not sure of satisfying, no luxury which could enervate mind or body. His parents were sober, God-fearing people; intelligent and up-

right; without pretension and without humility. He grew up in the company of boys like himself: wholesome, honest, self-respecting. They looked down on nobody; they never felt it possible they could be looked down upon. Their houses were the homes of probity, piety, patriotism. They learned in the admirable school readers of fifty years ago the lessons of heroic and splendid life which have come down from the past. They read in their weekly newspapers the story of the world's progress, in which they were eager to take part, and of the sins and wrongs of civilization, with which they burned to do battle. It was a serious and thoughtful time. The boys of that day felt dimly, but deeply, that days of sharp struggle and high achievement were before them. They looked at life with the wondering yet resolute eyes of a young esquire in his vigil of arms. They felt a time was coming when to them should be addressed the stern admonition of the Apostle, "Quit you like men; be strong."

It is not easy to give to those of a later generation any clear idea of that extraordinary spiritual awakening which passed over the country at the first red signal fires of the Civil War. It was not our earliest apocalypse: a hundred years before the nation had been revealed to itself, when after long discussion and much searching of heart the people of the colonies had resolved that to live without liberty was worse than to die, and had therefore wagered in the solemn game of war "their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor." In a stress of heat and labor unutterable, the country had been hammered and welded together; but thereafter for nearly a century there had been nothing in our life to touch the innermost fountain of feeling and devotion. We had had rumors of wars, — even wars we had had, not without

sacrifices and glory, — but nothing which went to the vital self-consciousness of the country, nothing which challenged the nation's right to live. But in 1860 the nation was going down into the Valley of Decision. The question which had been debated on thousands of platforms, which had been discussed in countless publications, which, thundered from innumerable pulpits, had caused in their congregations the bitter strife and dissension to which only cases of conscience can give rise, was everywhere pressing for solution. And not merely in the various channels of publicity was it alive and clamorous. About every fireside in the land, in the conversation of friends and neighbors, and, deeper still, in the secret of millions of human hearts, the battle of opinion was waging; and all men felt and saw — with more or less clearness — that an answer to the importunate question, Shall the nation live? was due, and not to be denied. And I do not mean that in the North alone there was this austere wrestling with conscience. In the South as well, below all the effervescence and excitement of a people perhaps more given to eloquent speech than we were, there was the profound agony of question and answer, the summons to decide whether honor and freedom did not call them to revolution and war. It is easy for partisanship to say that the one side was right and that the other was wrong. It is still easier for an indolent magnanimity to say that both were right. Perhaps in the wide view of ethics one is always right to follow his conscience, though it lead him to disaster and death. But history is inexorable. She takes no account of sentiment and intention; and in her cold and luminous eyes that side is right which fights in harmony with the stars in their courses. The men are right through whose efforts and struggles the world is helped

onward, and humanity moves to a higher level and a brighter day.

The men who are living to-day and who were young in 1860 will never forget the glory and glamour that filled the earth and the sky when the long twilight of doubt and uncertainty was ending and the time of action had come. A speech by Abraham Lincoln was an event not only of high moral significance, but of far-reaching importance; the drilling of a militia company by Ellsworth attracted national attention; the fluttering of the flag in the clear sky drew tears from the eyes of young men. Patriotism, which had been a rhetorical expression, became a passionate emotion, in which instinct, logic, and feeling were fused. The country was worth saving; it could be saved only by fire; no sacrifice was too great; the young men of the country were ready for the sacrifice; come weal, come woe, they were ready.

At seventeen years of age William McKinley heard this summons of his country. He was the sort of youth to whom a military life in ordinary times would possess no attractions. His nature was far different from that of the ordinary soldier. He had other dreams of life, its prizes and pleasures, than that of marches and battles. But to his mind there was no choice or question. The banner floating in the morning breeze was the beckoning gesture of his country. The thrilling notes of the trumpet called *him* — him and none other — into the ranks. His portrait in his first uniform is familiar to you all — the short, stocky figure; the quiet, thoughtful face; the deep, dark eyes. It is the face of a lad who could not stay at home when he thought he was needed in the field. He was of the stuff of which good soldiers are made. Had he been ten years older he would have entered at the head of a company and come out at the

head of a division. But he did what he could. He enlisted as a private; he learned to obey. His serious, sensible ways, his prompt, alert efficiency soon attracted the attention of his superiors. He was so faithful in little things they gave him more and more to do. He was untiring in camp and on the march; swift, cool, and fearless in fight. He left the army with field rank when the war ended, brevetted by President Lincoln for gallantry in battle.

In coming years when men seek to draw the moral of our great Civil War nothing will seem to them so admirable in all the history of our two magnificent armies as the way in which the war came to a close. When the Confederate army saw the time had come, they acknowledged the pitiless logic of facts and ceased fighting. When the army of the Union saw it was no longer needed, without a murmur or question, making no terms, asking no return, in the flush of victory and fulness of might it laid down its arms and melted back into the mass of peaceful citizens. There is no event, since the nation was born, which has so proved its solid capacity for self-government. Both sections share equally in that crown of glory. They had held a debate of incomparable importance and had fought it out with equal energy. A conclusion had been reached — and it is to the everlasting honor of both sides that they each knew when the war was over and the hour of a lasting peace had struck. We may admire the desperate daring of others who prefer annihilation to compromise, but the palm of common sense, and, I will say, of enlightened patriotism, belongs to the men like Grant and Lee, who knew when they had fought enough, for honor and for country.

William McKinley, one of that sensible million of men, gladly laid down his sword and betook himself to his

books. He quickly made up the time lost in soldiering. He attacked his Blackstone as he would have done a hostile entrenchment; finding the range of a country law library too narrow, he went to the Albany Law School, where he worked energetically with brilliant success; was admitted to the bar and settled down to practice — a brevetted veteran of 24 — in the quiet town of Canton, now and henceforward forever famous as the scene of his life and his place of sepulture. Here many blessings awaited him: high repute, professional success, and a domestic affection so pure, so devoted and stainless, that future poets, seeking an ideal of Christian marriage, will find in it a theme worthy of their songs. This is a subject to which the lightest allusion seems profanation; but it is impossible to speak of William McKinley without remembering that no truer, tenderer knight to his chosen lady ever lived among mortal men. If to the spirits of the just made perfect is permitted the consciousness of earthly things, we may be sure that his faithful soul is now watching over that gentle sufferer who counts the long hours in their shattered home in the desolate splendor of his fame.

A man possessing the qualities with which nature had endowed McKinley seeks political activity as naturally as a growing plant seeks light and air. A wholesome ambition; a rare power of making friends and keeping them; a faith, which may be called religious, in his country and its institutions; and, flowing from this, a belief that a man could do no nobler work than to serve such a country — these were the elements in his character that drew him irresistibly into public life. He had from the beginning a remarkable equipment: a manner of singular grace and charm; a voice of ringing quality and great carrying power — vast as were the crowds that

gathered about him, he reached their utmost fringe without apparent effort. He had an extraordinary power of marshalling and presenting significant facts, so as to bring conviction to the average mind. His range of reading was not wide; he read only what he might some day find useful, and what he read his memory held like brass. Those who knew him well in those early days can never forget the consummate skill and power with which he would select a few pointed facts, and, blow upon blow, would hammer them into the attention of great assemblages in Ohio, as Jael drove the nail into the head of the Canaanite captain. He was not often impassioned; he rarely resorted to the aid of wit or humor; yet I never saw his equal in controlling and convincing a popular audience by sheer appeal to their reason and intelligence. He did not flatter or cajole them, but there was an implied compliment in the serious and sober tone in which he addressed them. He seemed one of them; in heart and feeling he *was* one of them. Each workingman in a great crowd might say: That is the sort of man I would like to be, and under more favoring circumstances might have been. He had the divine gift of sympathy, which, though given only to the elect, makes all men their friends.

So it came naturally about that in 1876 — the beginning of the second century of the Republic — he began, by an election to Congress, his political career. Thereafter for fourteen years this Chamber was his home. I use the word advisedly. Nowhere in the world was he so in harmony with his environment as here; nowhere else did his mind work with such full consciousness of its powers. The air of debate was native to him; here he drank delight of battle with his peers. In after days, when he drove by this stately pile, or when on rare

occasions his duty called him here, he greeted his old haunts with the affectionate zest of a child of the house; during all the last ten years of his life, filled as they were with activity and glory, he never ceased to be homesick for this Hall. When he came to the Presidency, there was not a day when his Congressional service was not of use to him. Probably no other President has been in such full and cordial communion with Congress, if we may except Lincoln alone. McKinley knew the legislative body thoroughly, its composition, its methods, its habits of thought. He had the profoundest respect for its authority and an inflexible belief in the ultimate rectitude of its purposes. Our history shows how surely an Executive courts disaster and ruin by assuming an attitude of hostility or distrust to the Legislature; and, on the other hand, McKinley's frank and sincere trust and confidence in Congress were repaid by prompt and loyal support and coöperation. During his entire term of office this mutual trust and regard — so essential to the public welfare — was never shadowed by a single cloud.

He was a Republican. He could not be anything else. A Union soldier grafted upon a Clay Whig, he necessarily believed in the "American system" — in protection to home industries; in a strong, aggressive nationality; in a liberal construction of the Constitution. What any self-reliant nation might rightly do, he felt this nation had power to do, if required by the common welfare and not prohibited by our written charter.

Following the natural bent of his mind, he devoted himself to questions of finance and revenue, to the essentials of the national housekeeping. He took high rank in the House from the beginning. His readiness in debate, his mastery of every subject he handled, the

bright and amiable light he shed about him, and above all the unfailing courtesy and good will with which he treated friend and foe alike — one of the surest signatures of a nature born to great destinies — made his service in the House a pathway of unbroken success and brought him at last to the all-important post of Chairman of Ways and Means and leader of the majority. Of the famous revenue act which, in that capacity, he framed and carried through Congress, it is not my purpose here and now to speak. The embers of the controversy in the midst of which that law had its troubled being are yet too warm to be handled on a day like this. I may only say that it was never sufficiently tested to prove the praises of its friends or the criticism of its opponents. After a brief existence it passed away, for a time, in the storm that swept the Republicans out of power. McKinley also passed through a brief zone of shadow; his Congressional district having been rearranged for that purpose by a hostile legislature.

Some one has said it is easy to love our enemies; they help us so much more than our friends. The people whose malevolent skill had turned McKinley out of Congress deserved well of him and of the Republic. Never was Nemesis more swift and energetic. The Republicans of Ohio were saved the trouble of choosing a Governor — the other side had chosen one for them. A year after McKinley left Congress he was made Governor of Ohio, and two years later he was reëlected, each time by majorities unhoped for and overwhelming. He came to fill a space in the public eye which obscured a great portion of the field of vision. In two National Conventions the Presidency seemed within his reach. But he had gone there in the interest of others and his honor forbade any dalliance with temptation. So his nay was

nay — delivered with a tone and gesture there was no denying. His hour was not yet come.

There was, however, no long delay. He became, from year to year, the most prominent politician and orator in the country. Passionately devoted to the principles of his party, he was always ready to do anything, to go anywhere, to proclaim its ideas and to support its candidates. His face and his voice became familiar to millions of our people; and wherever they were seen and heard, men became his partisans. His face was cast in a classic mold; you see faces like it in antique marble in the galleries of the Vatican and in the portraits of the great cardinal-statesmen of Italy; his voice was the voice of the perfect orator — ringing, vibrating, tireless, persuading by its very sound, by its accent of sincere conviction. So prudent and so guarded were all his utterances, so lofty his courtesy, that he never embarrassed his friends, and never offended his opponents. For several months before the Republican National Convention met in 1896, it was evident to all who had eyes to see that Mr. McKinley was the only probable candidate of his party. Other names were mentioned, of the highest rank in ability, character, and popularity; they were supported by powerful combinations; but the nomination of McKinley as against the field was inevitable.

The campaign he made will be always memorable in our political annals. He and his friends had thought that the issue for the year was the distinctive and historic difference between the two parties on the subject of the tariff. To this wager of battle the discussions of the previous four years distinctly pointed. But no sooner had the two parties made their nominations than it became evident that the opposing candidate declined to accept the field of discussion chosen by the Republi-

cans, and proposed to put forward as the main issue the free coinage of silver. McKinley at once accepted this challenge, and taking the battle for protection as already won, went with energy into the discussion of the theories presented by his opponents. He had wisely concluded not to leave his home during the canvass, thus avoiding a proceeding which has always been of sinister augury in our politics; but from the front porch of his modest house in Canton he daily addressed the delegations which came from every part of the country to greet him in a series of speeches so strong, so varied, so pertinent, so full of facts briefly set forth, of theories embodied in a single phrase, that they formed the hourly text for the other speakers of his party, and give probably the most convincing proof we have of his surprising fertility of resource and flexibility of mind. All this was done without anxiety or strain. I remember a day I spent with him during that busy summer. He had made nineteen speeches the day before; that day he made many. But in the intervals of these addresses he sat in his study and talked, with nerves as quiet and a mind as free from care as if we had been spending a holiday at the seaside or among the hills.

When he came to the Presidency he confronted a situation of the utmost difficulty, which might well have appalled a man of less serene and tranquil self-confidence. There had been a state of profound commercial and industrial depression, from which his friends had said his election would relieve the country. Our relations with the outside world left much to be desired. The feeling between the Northern and Southern sections of the Union was lacking in the cordiality which was necessary to the welfare of both. Hawaii had asked for annexation and had been rejected by the preceding Administration.

There was a state of things in the Caribbean which could not permanently endure. Our neighbor's house was on fire, and there were grave doubts as to our rights and duties in the premises. A man either weak or rash, either irresolute or headstrong, might have brought ruin on himself and incalculable harm to the country.

Again I crave the pardon of those who differ with me, if, against all my intentions, I happen to say a word which may seem to them unbefitting the place and hour. But I am here to give the opinion which his friends entertained of President McKinley, of course claiming no immunity from criticism in what I shall say. I believe, then, that the verdict of history will be that he met all these grave questions with perfect valor and incomparable ability; that in grappling with them he rose to the full height of a great occasion, in a manner which redounded to the lasting benefit of the country and to his own immortal honor.

The least desirable form of glory to a man of his habitual mood and temper — that of successful war — was nevertheless conferred upon him by uncontrollable events. He felt the conflict must come; he deplored its necessity; he strained almost to breaking his relations with his friends, in order, first — if it might be — to prevent and then to postpone it to the latest possible moment. But when the die was cast, he labored with the utmost energy and ardor, and with an intelligence in military matters which showed how much of the soldier still survived in the mature statesman to push forward the war to a decisive close. War was an anguish to him; he wanted it short and conclusive. His merciful zeal communicated itself to his subordinates, and the war, so long dreaded, whose consequences were so momentous, ended in a hundred days.

Mr. Stedman, the dean of our poets, has called him "Augmenter of the State." It is a noble title; if justly conferred, it ranks him among the few whose names may be placed definitely and forever in charge of the historic Muse. Under his rule Hawaii has come to us, and Tutuila; Porto Rico and the vast archipelago of the East. Cuba is free. Our position in the Caribbean is assured beyond the possibility of future question. The doctrine called by the name of Monroe, so long derided and denied by alien publicists, evokes now no challenge or contradiction when uttered to the world. It has become an international truism. Our sister republics to the south of us are convinced that we desire only their peace and prosperity. Europe knows that we cherish no dreams but those of world-wide commerce, the benefit of which shall be to all nations. The state is augmented, but it threatens no nation under heaven. As to those regions which have come under the shadow of our flag, the possibility of their being damaged by such a change of circumstances was in the view of McKinley a thing unthinkable. To believe that we could not administer them to their advantage was to turn infidel to our American faith of more than a hundred years.

In dealing with foreign powers he will take rank with the greatest of our diplomatists. It was a world of which he had little special knowledge before coming to the Presidency. But his marvellous adaptability was in nothing more remarkable than in the firm grasp he immediately displayed in international relations. In preparing for war and in the restoration of peace he was alike adroit, courteous, and far-sighted. When a sudden emergency declared itself, as in China, in a state of things of which our history furnished no precedent and international law no safe and certain precept, he hesi-

tated not a moment to take the course marked out for him by considerations of humanity and the national interests. Even while the legations were fighting for their lives against bands of infuriated fanatics, he decided that we were at peace with China; and while that conclusion did not hinder him from taking the most energetic measures to rescue our imperilled citizens, it enabled him to maintain close and friendly relations with the wise and heroic viceroys of the south, whose resolute stand saved that ancient Empire from anarchy and spoliation. He disposed of every question as it arose with a promptness and clarity of vision that astonished his advisers, and he never had occasion to review a judgment or reverse a decision.

By patience, by firmness, by sheer reasonableness, he improved our understanding with all the great powers of the world, and rightly gained the blessing which belongs to the peacemakers.

But the achievements of the nation in war and diplomacy are thrown in the shade by the vast economical developments which took place during Mr. McKinley's administration. Up to the time of his first election, the country was suffering from a long period of depression, the reasons of which I will not try to seek. But from the moment the ballots were counted that betokened his advent to power a great and momentous movement in advance declared itself along all the lines of industry and commerce. In the very month of his inauguration steel rails began to be sold at eighteen dollars a ton — one of the most significant facts of modern times. It meant that American industries had adjusted themselves to the long depression — that through the power of the race to organize and combine, stimulated by the conditions then prevailing, and perhaps by the prospect of

legislation favorable to industry, America had begun to undersell the rest of the world. The movement went on without ceasing. The President and his party kept the pledges of their platform and their canvass. The Dingley bill was speedily framed and set in operation. All industries responded to the new stimulus, and American trade set out on its new crusade, not to conquer the world, but to trade with it on terms advantageous to all concerned. I will not weary you with statistics; but one or two words seem necessary to show how the acts of McKinley as President kept pace with his professions as candidate. His four years of administration were costly; we carried on a war which, though brief, was expensive. Although we borrowed two hundred millions and paid our own expenses, without asking for indemnity, the effective reduction of the debt now exceeds the total of the war bonds. We pay six millions less in interest than we did before the war and no bond of the United States yields the holder two per cent. on its market value. So much for the government credit; and we have five hundred and forty-six millions of gross gold in the Treasury.

But, coming to the development of our trade in the four McKinley years, we seem to be entering the realm of fable. In the last fiscal year our excess of exports over imports was $664,592,826. In the last four years it was $2,354,442,213. These figures are so stupendous that they mean little to a careless reader — but consider! The excess of exports over imports for the whole preceding period from 1790 to 1897 — from Washington to McKinley — was only $356,808,822.

The most extravagant promises made by the sanguine McKinley advocates five years ago are left out of sight by these sober facts. The "debtor nation" has become

the chief creditor nation. The financial centre of the world, which required thousands of years to journey from the Euphrates to the Thames and the Seine, seems passing to the Hudson between daybreak and dark.

I will not waste your time by explaining that I do not invoke for any man the credit of this vast result. The captain cannot claim that it is he who drives the mighty steamship over the tumbling billows of the trackless deep; but praise is justly due him if he has made the best of her tremendous powers, if he has read aright the currents of the sea and the lessons of the stars. And we should be ungrateful if in this hour of prodigious prosperity we should fail to remember that William McKinley with sublime faith foresaw it, with indomitable courage labored for it, put his whole heart and mind into the work of bringing it about; that it was his voice which, in dark hours, rang out, heralding the coming light, as over the twilight waters of the Nile the mystic cry of Memnon announced the dawn to Egypt, waking from sleep.

Among the most agreeable incidents of the President's term of office were the two journeys he made to the South. The moral reunion of the sections — so long and so ardently desired by him — had been initiated by the Spanish war, when the veterans of both sides, and their sons, had marched shoulder to shoulder together under the same banner. The President in these journeys sought, with more than usual eloquence and pathos, to create a sentiment which should end forever the ancient feud. He was too good a politician to expect any results in the way of votes in his favor, and he accomplished none. But for all that, the good seed did not fall on barren ground. In the warm and chivalrous hearts of that generous people the echo of his cordial and broth-

erly words will linger long, and his name will be cherished in many a household where even yet the Lost Cause is worshipped.

Mr. McKinley was reëlected by an overwhelming majority. There had been little doubt of the result among well-informed people; but when it was known, a profound feeling of relief and renewal of trust were evident among the leaders of capital and of industry, not only in this country, but everywhere. They felt that the immediate future was secure, and that trade and commerce might safely push forward in every field of effort and enterprise. He inspired universal confidence, which is the life-blood of the commercial system of the world. It began frequently to be said that such a state of things ought to continue; one after another, men of prominence said that the President was his own best successor. He paid little attention to these suggestions until they were repeated by some of his nearest friends. Then he saw that one of the most cherished traditions of our public life was in danger. The generation which has seen the prophecy of the Papal throne — *Non videbis annos Petri* — twice contradicted by the longevity of holy men was in peril of forgetting the unwritten law of our Republic: Thou shalt not exceed the years of Washington. The President saw it was time to speak, and in his characteristic manner he spoke, briefly, but enough. Where the lightning strikes there is no need of iteration. From that hour, no one dreamed of doubting his purpose of retiring at the end of his second term, and it will be long before another such lesson is required.

He felt that the harvest time was come, to garner in the fruits of so much planting and culture, and he was determined that nothing he might do or say should be liable to the reproach of a personal interest. Let us say

frankly he was a party man; he believed the policies advocated by him and his friends counted for much in the country's progress and prosperity. He hoped in his second term to accomplish substantial results in the development and affirmation of those policies. I spent a day with him shortly before he started on his fateful journey to Buffalo. Never had I seen him higher in hope and patriotic confidence. He was as sure of the future of his country as the Psalmist who cried, "Glorious things are spoken of thee, thou City of God." He was gratified to the heart that we had arranged a treaty which gave us a free hand in the Isthmus. In fancy he saw the canal already built and the argosies of the world passing through it in peace and amity. He saw in the immense evolution of American trade the fulfilment of all his dreams, the reward of all his labors. He was — I need not say — an ardent protectionist, never more sincere and devoted than during those last days of his life. He regarded reciprocity as the bulwark of protection — not a breach, but a fulfilment of the law. The treaties which for four years had been preparing under his personal supervision he regarded as ancillary to the general scheme. He was opposed to any revolutionary plan of change in the existing legislation; he was careful to point out that everything he had done was in faithful compliance with the law itself.

In that mood of high hope, of generous expectation, he went to Buffalo, and there, on the threshold of eternity, he delivered that memorable speech, worthy for its loftiness of tone, its blameless morality, its breadth of view, to be regarded as his testament to the nation. Through all his pride of country and his joy of its success, runs the note of solemn warning, as in Kipling's noble hymn, "Lest we forget."

Our capacity to produce has developed so enormously and our products have so multiplied that the problem of more markets requires our urgent and immediate attention. Only a broad and enlightened policy will keep what we have. No other policy will get more. In these times of marvellous business energy and gain we ought to be looking to the future, strengthening the weak places in our industrial and commercial systems, that we may be ready for any storm or strain.

By sensible trade arrangements which will not interrupt our home production we shall extend the outlets for our increasing surplus. A system which provides a mutual exchange of commodities is manifestly essential to the continued and healthful growth of our export trade. We must not repose in fancied security that we can forever sell everything and buy little or nothing. If such a thing were possible, it would not be best for us or for those with whom we deal. . . . Reciprocity is the natural outgrowth of our wonderful industrial development under the domestic policy now firmly established. . . . The period of exclusiveness is past. The expansion of our trade and commerce is the pressing problem. Commercial wars are unprofitable. A policy of good will and friendly trade relations will prevent reprisals. Reciprocity treaties are in harmony with the spirit of the times ; measures of retaliation are not.

I wish I had time to read the whole of this wise and weighty speech; nothing I might say could give such a picture of the President's mind and character. His years of apprenticeship had been served. He stood that day past master of the art of statesmanship. He had nothing more to ask of the people. He owed them nothing but truth and faithful service. His mind and heart were purged of the temptations which beset all men engaged in the struggle to survive. In view of the revelation of his nature vouchsafed to us that day, and the fate which impended over him, we can only say in deep affection and solemn awe, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Even for that vision he was not unworthy.

He had not long to wait. The next day sped the bolt of doom, and for a week after — in an agony of dread broken by illusive glimpses of hope that our prayers might be answered — the nation waited for the end. Nothing in the glorious life that we saw gradually waning was more admirable and exemplary than its close. The gentle humanity of his words, when he saw his assailant in danger of summary vengeance, "Don't let them hurt him;" his chivalrous care that the news should be broken gently to his wife; the fine courtesy with which he apologized for the damage which his death would bring to the great Exhibition; and the heroic resignation of his final words, "It is God's way. His will, not ours, be done," were all the instinctive expressions of a nature so lofty and so pure that pride in its nobility at once softened and enhanced the nation's sense of loss. The Republic grieved over such a son — but is proud forever of having produced him. After all, in spite of its tragic ending, his life was extraordinarily happy. He had, all his days, troops of friends, the cheer of fame and fruitful labor; and he became at last —

> "On fortune's crowning slope,
> The pillar of a people's hope,
> The centre of a world's desire."

He was fortunate even in his untimely death, for an event so tragical called the world imperatively to the immediate study of his life and character, and thus anticipated the sure praises of posterity.

Every young and growing people has to meet, at moments, the problems of its destiny. Whether the question comes, as in Thebes, from a sphinx, symbol of the hostile forces of omnipotent nature, who punishes with instant death our failure to understand her meaning; or

whether it comes, as in Jerusalem, from the Lord of Hosts, who commands the building of His temple, it comes always with the warning that the past is past, and experience vain. "Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live forever?" The fathers are dead; the prophets are silent; the questions are new, and have no answer but in time.

When the horny outside case which protects the infancy of a chrysalis nation suddenly bursts, and, in a single abrupt shock, it finds itself floating on wings which had not existed before, whose strength it has never tested, among dangers it cannot foresee and is without experience to measure, every motion is a problem, and every hesitation may be an error. The past gives no clue to the future. The fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live forever? We are ourselves the fathers! We are ourselves the prophets! The questions that are put to us we must answer without delay, without help — for the sphinx allows no one to pass.

At such moments we may be humbly grateful to have had leaders simple in mind, clear in vision, — as far as human vision can safely extend, — penetrating in knowledge of men, supple and flexible under the strains and pressures of society, instinct with the energy of new life and untried strength, cautious, calm, and, above all, gifted in a supreme degree with the most surely victorious of all political virtues — the genius of infinite patience.

The obvious elements which enter into the fame of a public man are few and by no means recondite. The man who fills a great station in a period of change, who leads his country successfully through a time of crisis; who, by his power of persuading and controlling others, has been able to command the best thought of his age,

so as to leave his country in a moral or material condition in advance of where he found it, — such a man's position in history is secure. If, in addition to this, his written or spoken words possess the subtle quality which carry them far and lodge them in men's hearts; and, more than all, if his utterances and actions, while informed with a lofty morality, are yet tinged with the glow of human sympathy, the fame of such a man will shine like a beacon through the mists of ages — an object of reverence, of imitation, and of love. It should be to us an occasion of solemn pride that in the three great crises of our history such a man was not denied us. The moral value to a nation of a renown such as Washington's and Lincoln's and McKinley's is beyond all computation. No loftier ideal can be held up to the emulation of ingenuous youth. With such examples we cannot be wholly ignoble. Grateful as we may be for what they did, let us be still more grateful for what they were. While our daily being, our public policies, still feel the influence of their work, let us pray that in our spirits their lives may be voluble, calling us upward and onward.

There is not one of us but feels prouder of his native land because the august figure of Washington presided over its beginnings; no one but vows it a tenderer love because Lincoln poured out his blood for it; no one but must feel his devotion for his country renewed and kindled when he remembers how McKinley loved, revered, and served it, showed in his life how a citizen should live, and in his last hour taught us how a gentleman could die.

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